

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

NO. 15 EAST FAIR STREET, ATLANTA, GA.,

March 17, 1903.

DEAR EDITOR: I have been interested in reading the various opinions and sketch items in regard to military discipline of hospitals, etc.

I likewise note Miss Ayer's request to superintendents as follows: "I would like to hear from some of the superintendents on the question of misdemeanor: what penalties they impose for the breaking of various rules of conduct and discipline?"

What a murmur of multitudinous tongues, like the whispering leaves of a wind-stirred oak, constantly echoing words of criticism of the trained or untrained nurse!

This theme has almost become a chronic disorder, and it seems to the writer that in this age of science and therapeutics there must be a specific detergent to obviate this morbid condition.

First, let the hospital be a scene of sisterly love, pleasant looks, kind words, and the ruling element a spirit of coöperation.

A word to the senior and junior nurse: Never forget that you were once a probationer, and that it is your duty to be kind to her and to accord due respect to inferiors as well as superiors. A failure to do this on your part shows a lack of culture and refined breeding.

There are many unobtrusive ways in which a spirit of harmony may be developed in a hospital.

The modulation of the voice of the superintendent when speaking to a pupil nurse, or by nurses when conversing, will add a wonderful halo of happiness—or, on the other hand, misery—to the individual. One accent will inspire respect and confidence and a determination to combat any obstacle till the goal is reached, and another tone will rouse a spirit of rebellion and despondency, and friction follows.

To the probationer I would say the key to one's success or failure is preëminently contained in the answer to the interrogation, "How earnest is she?"

Where most nurses fail and become disheartened, it has been due to neglect of little things too microscopic to attract attention.

Whatever you attempt to do in the hospital or in private practice, try with all your God-given faculties to do well. Even if in your judgment it be the most menial part of hospital technique, devote yourself to it with a heart of willingness, and the task will grow lighter as you conquer your reluctant spirit.

You must begin by doing cheerfully the seemingly small minutiae; and if the first seed are free from tares,—discord and irritation,—your harvest will be a successful reaping in due time.

Vigilance in the matter of detail is the foundation upon which success is built. Accuracy in observation, accuracy in speech, and accuracy in your every

duty is necessary if you would attain the success to which you aspire. If you fail for lack of exactness, you alone are to blame.

It is for you to choose which course you will pursue: a life of honor, integrity, ministering to the sick in such a way as will command and warrant respect, or a life of indolence and unrighteous conduct, when eventually the billows of the dark sea will engulf you.

If the latter is the purpose of your heart, you are out of your sphere in a hospital, and I would suggest to you, for the sake of those who are loyal and true, that you, like the Arab, fold up your tent and quietly steal away before your sin finds you out.

Military rules will never materially affect the honest and sincere nurse; others should not be retained to contaminate and disorganize the workings of an entire hospital. Weed out the tares, and all strife will cease.

BESSIE BANNISTER.

DEAR EDITOR: I was very much interested in the report of the discussion on "The Discipline of the Nurse" in the March number of your magazine, and from an army nurse's stand-point would like to emphasize the importance of military discipline and tactics being taught in our training-schools.

After nearly four years of close association with graduate nurses representing many different schools, and comparing those of long service under army military discipline with the army "probationer," as she is called, I believe that fully three-fourths of the failures in the Army Nurse Corps are due to a misunderstanding and a misapplication of military tactics and discipline.

Military discipline is neither a personal nor a social question unless one makes it so. It is merely an official relation for purposes of economy, and the honor of giving a command is only exceeded by the grace with which it is received.

It has been said that it requires three years to become a good soldier, and the same might be said of nurses in the service.

Some of the larger schools make a point of military discipline, and so far as I have observed it never spoils good material.

I have heard it remarked many times by persons outside of the profession (referring to army nurses) that nurses as a class have a stronger individuality than any other class of women.

As Miss Banfield says, one cannot command unless he first learn how to obey; and who needs to possess both those qualities more than the nurse in every branch of her profession?

EX-ARMY NURSE.

DEAR EDITOR: I sometimes wonder if the nurses of New York State realize the amount of work done by a few individual nurses for the profession at large in connection with the bill for State registration recently presented at Albany. The Committee on Legislation, of which Miss Eva Allerton, of Rochester, is chairman, worked hard to frame a bill which would protect the interests of the trained nurse and be sufficiently acceptable to guarantee its passage in spite of many opposing forces. The alteration of even a word or clause meant much thought and consultation, as well as time. Three times the bill came up for a hearing when it was necessary for those interested to be present, and many nurses from different parts of the State went to Albany at their own expense to use their influence in proving the necessity of such a bill. It is to these "strenuous" workers that our thanks are due for the success of this measure, and I offer mine most sincerely.

A. RHODES.